

REMARKS

Claims 51-52, 54-55, and 64-80 are presented for examination. Claim 53 has been cancelled without prejudice. Claims 78-80 have been added. Claims 51, 64, 66, 68, 69, and 71 have been amended. The Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of this application in view of the above amendments and the following remarks.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants note with appreciation the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter in claim 68. The Applicants have amended claim 68 as proposed by the Examiner and respectfully request that the Examiner formally allow claim 68.

35 U.S.C. §103(a) Rejection – Shirasaki in view of Ivaldi

The Examiner has rejected claims 51-66 and 69-77 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,593,034 issued to Shirasaki (hereinafter "Shirasaki") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,507,390 issued to Ivaldi (hereinafter "Ivaldi"). The Applicants respectfully submit that the present claims are allowable over Shirasaki and Ivaldi.

As amended, claim 51 recites a method comprising *"adding a first gas to an enclosure having a second gas through an inlet port having a plurality of discrete openings in the wall arranged to distribute a flow of the first gas over a length of a side of the enclosure, the first gas having a different composition than the second gas, the enclosure being between a mask protective device, a patterned mask, and walls connecting the mask protective device with the patterned mask; and removing at least a portion of the second gas from the enclosure through one or more outlet ports"*. Shirasaki and Ivaldi do not teach or suggest adding a gas to an enclosure through an inlet

port having a plurality of discrete openings in the wall arranged to distribute a flow of the first gas over a length of a side of the enclosure.

Shirasaki does not teach or suggest adding a gas to an enclosure through an inlet port having a plurality of discrete openings in the wall arranged to distribute a flow of the first gas over a length of a side of the enclosure. On page 3 of the Office Action, the Examiner has stated “Shirasaki further suggests adding the first gas through at least two openings of the vent and removing the second quantity of the second gas through at least two openings”. Applicants respectfully disagree. Applicants agree with the Examiner that Shirasaki discusses a frame having at least two gas passage openings (see e.g., the Abstract). However, Applicants submit that Shirasaki does not teach or suggest that more than one of the gas passage openings be used to introduce gas. In Example 1, one of the two gas passage openings is used to introduce gas and the other gas passage opening is used to discharge gas (see e.g., column 5, lines 34-38). Even in Example 2, where four gas passage openings are included, only one of the gas passage openings is used to introduce gas, while the other three gas passage openings are used to discharge gas (see e.g., column 6, lines 10-22). Accordingly, Shirasaki does not teach or suggest adding a gas to an enclosure through an inlet port having a plurality of discrete openings in the wall arranged to distribute a flow of the first gas over a length of a side of the enclosure.

Nor does Invaldi teach or suggest adding a gas to an enclosure through an inlet port having a plurality of discrete openings in the wall arranged to distribute a flow of the first gas over a length of a side of the enclosure. At column 6, lines 1-4, Invaldi discusses that “*In an alternate embodiment, purge gas supply interface 316 is a first port, hole, or valve in porous frame 206 for providing purge gas through porous frame 206 and into air gap 112.*” However, Applicants respectfully submit that there is no teaching or suggestion that either a plurality of discrete inlet ports be provided or that the plurality of discrete

inlet ports be arranged to distribute a flow of the gas over a length of a side of the enclosure. Accordingly, Ivaldi does not teach or suggest adding a gas to an enclosure through an inlet port having a plurality of discrete openings in the wall arranged to distribute a flow of the first gas over a length of a side of the enclosure.

To establish a prima facie case of obviousness the prior art references must teach or suggest all the claim limitations. However, the combination of Shirasaki and Ivaldi does not teach or suggest the limitations of independent claim 51. Accordingly, for at least this reason, claim 51, and its dependent claims, are believed to be allowable.

Independent claim 69, and its dependent claims, are believed to be allowable for similar reasons.

35 U.S.C. §103(a) Rejection – Shirasaki, Ivaldi, and Shimada

The Examiner has rejected claim 67 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Shirasaki in view of Ivaldi and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,735,961 to Shimada (hereinafter "Shimada").

As discussed above, Shirasaki and Ivaldi do not teach or suggest the limitations of the independent claims. Applicants respectfully submit that Shimada does not remedy what is missing from Shirasaki and Ivaldi. Accordingly, without admitting the appropriateness of combining Shimada with Shirasaki and Ivaldi, the present claims are believed to be allowable over any combination of Shirasaki, Ivaldi, and Shimada.

New Claims Believed to be Allowable

New claim 78 recites a method comprising "*adding a first gas to an enclosure having a second gas through one or more slits aligned with a length of a side of the enclosure to distribute a flow of the first gas over the length of the side of the enclosure,*

the first gas having a different composition than the second gas, the enclosure being between a mask protective device, a patterned mask, and walls connecting the mask protective device with the patterned mask; and removing at least a portion of the second gas from the enclosure through one or more outlet ports”.

As understood by Applicants, the cited art of record do not teach or suggest adding a first gas to an enclosure having a second gas through one or more slits aligned with a length of a side of the enclosure to distribute a flow of the first gas over the length of the side of the enclosure. Accordingly, claim 78, and its dependent claims, are believed to be allowable.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is believed that all claims now pending patentably define the subject invention over the prior art of record and are in condition for allowance. Applicants respectfully request that the rejections be withdrawn and the claims be allowed at the earliest possible date.

Request For Telephone Interview

The Examiner is invited to call Brent E. Vecchia at (303) 740-1980 if there remains any issue with allowance of the case.

Request For An Extension Of Time

The Applicants respectfully petition for an extension of time to respond to the outstanding Office Action pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.136(a) should one be necessary. Please charge our Deposit Account No. 02-2666 to cover the necessary fee under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17 for such an extension.

Charge Our Deposit Account

Please charge any shortage to our Deposit Account No. 02-2666.

Respectfully submitted,

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